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ABSTRACT

Education in America is facing a postindustrial crisis of legitimacy brought on by the cultural contradictions of advanced American capitalism. The theorist and social critic, D. Bell, describes the most significant feature of postindustrial society as "the disjunction of realms." This concept describes the progressive division of labor or technical specialization in all realms and the tendancy of highly organized systems to become disorganized. In U.S. schools, cultural considerations--instilling an appreciation of the nation's cultural legacy and an awareness of the fundamental concerns of the human heart and mind--are being avoided in favor of political and economic concerns. Ideally, schools would be the primary agent through which culture is transmitted and made accessible to students. Yet schools seem ill-equipped for this purpose, as they are driven by the principles of the techno-economic, rather than cultural, realm--novelty (in the form of a preoccupation with reform: "new and improved" education), efficiency (more education for the taxpayers' dollar), and utility (the ability of schools to meet a predetermined, politically charged set of goals established by the polity). In this model, schools serve as little more than institutions that specialize the human intellect for work in the capitalist system. Attempts to counter this anti-intellectual, anti-cultural method of education must center around attempts to articulate the cultural legacy on behalf of the institution of education. Administrators should be critical of attempts to improve schools based on the ends of the techno-economic realm (vocationalism, perpetuation of U.S. global economic supremacy, etc.). (RJS)

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Cultural Contradictions and the Institutional Dilemma of Education in Capitalist America

(An Alternative View of School Effectiveness)

by

Craig B. Howley
ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools
May 1990

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Art is permeated with pessimism, not seldom intertwined with comedy. Its "liberating laughter" recalls the danger and the evil that have passed--this time! But the pessimism of art is not counterrevolutionary. It serves to warn against the "happy consciousness" of radical praxis: as if all of that which art invokes and indicts could be settled through the class struggle.

(Marcuse, 1978, p. 14)

To that extent, the [existential] questions [that confront all human beings] are tragedy and the answers are comedy. As that wise philosopher Groucho Marx once observed, it is easier to do tragedy than comedy, for all men cry at the same things, but laugh at different ones.

(Bell, 1976, p. 166)

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Cultural Contradictions and the Institutional Dilemma of Schooling in Capitalist America

Among industrialized capitalist nations, the United States allocates a moderate proportion of its Gross National Product (GNP) to the public support of schools (National Education Association, 1990). In return, however, the public expects that schools will produce a significant public good (Coleman, 1988a, 1988b). This is a role in which the schools must negotiate two complex realities, both of which affect the degree to which they can meet such expectations (Bell, 1973, 1976).

School Effectiveness, Institutional Competence, and the Educational Dilemma

First, the kinds of public good expected to flow from schools vary widely, and the various goals that reflect those expectations are often incompatible with one another (Bell, 1973; Mitchell, 1979). Whereas private schools typically seem to pursue a limited set of goals, public schools are expected to be all things to all people (Ravitch, 1983; Spring, 1986; cf. Coleman & Hoffer, 1987).

Second, politically-charged entities respond to requests for the funds necessary to deliver the anticipated public good. The ritual of such response, however, entails much more than valuation of the public good. In particular, the political economy of the United States is defined by a system of "negative rights." Since this system of rights is intended to preserve a wide scope for private privilege (Hobsbawm, 1962; Williams, 1966, 1969), it

has been persuasively argued that constitutional forms (such as the legislative process) serve principally to mask a covert system of private despoliation (Bell, 1976; Heilbroner, 1985; Katz, 1968; Marcuse, 1964; Mills, 1959).[1]

Moreover, Coleman (1988a, 1988b) implies that private schools, in general, derive greater support for reaching their comparatively more limited goals from the human--rather than financial--resource he has conceptualized as "social capital." Social capital, in brief, comprises various types of intergenerational support that are accessible (and implicit) in communities, (e.g., the community of the church). This quality of social capital is, according to Coleman, increasingly less accessible to public schools, the members of whose disjointed constituency are unlikely to participate in the polity or culture of a unified community--if, indeed, they belong to any community at all (see the subsequent discussion of the terms "polity" and "culture" as they appear in the work of Daniel Bell).

Both these realities--and the tensions and interactions of their mutual realities--bear on the traditional means of assessing organizational effectiveness: (1) the goal model--how well an organization achieves its goals--in this case, the anticipated public good (e.g., Bidwell & Kasarda, 1975; Madaus, Airasian, & Kellaghan, 1980) and (2) the system resource model--how well an organization secures the means of its survival, in this case, not

[1]Theorists like Meyer (1977) have attempted to explain how schools institutionalize and legitimize such privilege, while researchers like Jencks (Jencks et al., 1972; Jencks et al., 1979) have detailed the ways in which educational attainment serves as the legitimating vehicle for realizing the prerogatives of private privilege in the liberal democratic polity.

only public funds, but social capital as well (e.g., Coleman, 1988a, 1988b; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Steers, 1975; Yuchtman & Seashore, 1967).

Although an assessment of how well particular schools provide for the public good is clearly useful to the managers and policymakers of the "educational enterprise," the main point of this essay is to explain how such assessments are functions of the tensions (or "contradictions") of contemporary culture. The principal analytic applied to this issue derives from Daniel Bell's notion of the cultural contradictions of capitalism (Bell, 1973, 1976). Bell's concepts provide a coherent, but complex, way to critique the organizational effectiveness of schools in general terms.

A cultural critique such as this, therefore, ultimately addresses what Timar and Kirp (1987) have called the "institutional competence" of schools. Whereas effectiveness typically refers to schools' success in carrying out operational goals (e.g., raising average student achievement from the 40th to the 60th percentile), institutional competence refers to the schools' overall capacity to respond to goals, especially those put forward by policymakers during the 1980s.[2] This essay suggests that the cultural contradictions of capitalism exercise a determining influence on the institutional competence of schools. In fact, this essay aims to show that such contradictions have done more than affected the institutional competence of schools: they have compromised the very legitimacy of schools.

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[2] "Strong mistrust of institutions, on the one hand, and romantic faith in the capacity of the individual, on the other, contributed to the fragmentation that characterizes the schools today. To the extent that present reform efforts continue that tradition, policies that have been promulgated to foster excellence will only add to the array of policies that currently fracture the institutional purpose of schools" (Timar & Kirp, 1987, p. 329).

The title of this paper, however, uses the word "dilemma" rather than "competence" or "legitimacy" because, as Bell (1976) notes, culture is reflexive: return and redemption are within the realm of the possible. Hence, Bell's analysis, as applied in this essay, suggests that schools, like other cultural institutions, confront a dilemma, not an inevitable denouement.

The Notion of Disjunct Realms

Bell contends that the most significant feature of the post-industrial world is what he terms "the disjunction of realms." Whereas the enlightenment proposed--and the industrial revolution (and both its critics and its enthusiasts) affirmed--that social systems were integrated wholes, the hallmark of the emerging post-industrial world is, in Bell's analysis, the uncoupling of previously related realms (or, more conventionally, "systems"). Bell's critique, then, entails an epistemic critique of what we now <u>believe</u> society is and means, more than it entails a materialist investigation of what the structures of society "really are."

For the purposes of this essay, Bell's view of disjunction is taken as axiomatic. A critique of this view, though interesting, is beyond the scope of this essay. One may, however, note that the theoretical justification of the "disjunction of realms" is not so strong as it might be. The realms to which Bell refers--the economy, the polity, and the culture of advanced capitalism--<u>are</u>, despite his claims to the contrary (see Bell, 1976, p. 14), still clearly related to one another. In fact, Bell's point is that the relationships are becoming increasingly tense. It is important to understand that the notion of "disjunction" is less an observation of absolute separation than it is of tensions--contradictions--that have, in modern time, tended to

uncouple (perhaps "specialize" would be more accurate) the "realms" that nineteenth and twentieth century social thought had (at least conceptually) coupled.

Key concepts in the imputed process of uncoupling are (1) the progressive division of labor or technical specialization in all realms and (2) the metaphor of entropy, which refers analogically to the law of physics that establishes the general tendency of highly organized systems to become disorganized. The more highly organized (or specialized via the division of labor) the society, the more prone it becomes to disorganization, according to this analogy.

This analysis is significant in comparison, for example, to systems theory: its focus is the very environment to which systems theory would have organizations adapt. If the environment in which schools function is itself entropic, adjustment to that environment may not be wise; indeed, it may be impossible.

Bell's analysis, then, is an attempt to synthesize trends at work in the capitalist system at least since the 18th century and to project those trends on the emerging post-industrial capitalist world (with the U.S. serving as prototypical capitalist culture). The contradictions that drive this analysis, will be examined in more detail, following a more brief description of the three realms of society described by Bell (1973, 1976).

The Three Realms of Society

The three realms are organized by "axial principles" and "axial structures," according to Bell (1973, 1976). These features characterize the function and structure of each realm.

Economy. The economy (or "techno-economic realm" in Bell's phrase) entails many features that other analysts would ordinarily describe as cultural. These include not merely the calculus of the marketplace represented by contemporary neo-classical economics (the industrial manager's toolkit) but the various technologies, neo-sciences, formal and informal organizational structures, and even the habits of mind associated with them. The structure around which the techno-economic realm is organized is bureaucracy and hierarchy (its axial structure). The axial principle of the techno-economic realm is functional rationality. In this scheme of organization, according to Bell,

> There is a simple measure of value, namely utility ... There is a simple principle of change, namely the ability to substitute products or processes because they are more efficient and yield higher return at lesser cost ... The social structure is a reified world because it is a structure of roles ... A person becomes an object or a "thing," not because the enterprise is inhumane, but because the performance of a task is subordinated to the organization's ends.
>
> (Bell, 1976, p. 11)

Polity. The polity, or "political realm" in Bell's phrase, is equally broad. It entails the machinations of everyday partisan action (often guided by techno-economic criteria). More significant to Bell's analysis, however, is the fact that the polity is the realm in which the critically important issue of justice is effected or subverted, principally through the use of power. The polity thus encompasses the notions of social structure and function, particularly as they pertain to the evolution or adaptation of the social compact. Bell derives the axial structure of the political realm (within capitalism) from political liberalism: participation (representative

"democracy" in the main). The axial principle of the polity is legitimacy. Thus,

> The implicit condition is the idea of equality, that all men (sic) are to have an equal voice in this consensus .... The idea ... has expanded to include equality in all ... dimensions of social life.... [The ideal of equality] is always the source to which aggrieved groups have recourse when seeking justice in the society.
>
> (Bell, 1976, pp. 11-12)

Culture. Given the scope of the first two realms, the scope of the third (culture) can almost be inferred. Culture, according to Bell, is the realm of expressive symbolism, as manifested in such institutions as religion, the humanities (literature, art, music, and--perhaps--philosophy), and (though Bell gives them less emphasis in his discourse) also mathematics and the sciences (see footnote in Bell, 1976, p. 12).

The axial principles and structures of the cultural realm of capitalism are, however, less clear in Bell's analysis than those of the economy and the polity (cf. Bell, 1976, pp. 12-13). For one thing, Bell defines culture much more narrowly than economy or the polity. For another, Bell has in view both the operant axial principles and structures of the culture of advanced capitalism, as well as the latent principles and structures of traditional culture, to which he would see the culture return. Since the latent principles and structures are those Bell prefers, and since they provide focus for his critique, they are characterized next.

While not explicitly stated as such by Bell, the (latent) axial principle of culture--as it has existed for millennia--may be taken to be the creation of meanings and values that emerge "from an internally cohesive set of commonsense perceptions or formal conventions, but also from some notion of an

ordered universe and of man's place in it" (Bell, 1976, p. 132). In the modern world, however, the "imperial self" is the route taken by culture to create such meanings (Bell, 1973, pp. 477-478)[3]. The modes of expression that convey such meanings and values (i.e., aesthetic and intellectual form) comprise the (latent) axial structure of culture (cf. Bell, 1976, p. 12; 36-37; 110-116, 126-127).

This narrow definition of culture is the feature of Bell's analysis that has particular relevance for education (see Bell, 1973, pp. 408-423). Schools have the potential of maintaining and extending culture in Bell's sense of the term. Of particular relevance is the balance between the cognitive and non-cognitive effects of schools on students. Some observers (e.g., Etzioni, 1983) fault the schools for failing to instill in students the discipline required of work roles. Other observers fault the schools for neglecting the skills, knowledge, and habits of thought that inform the intellect (e.g., Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Hofstadter, 1963; Katz, 1971). At the same time, schools have clearly responded to the mandates of the utilitarian principles of the techno-economic realm. Compliance training and custodial care (as non-cognitive features of schooling) may be functions that reflect the disjunction of realms featured in Bell's analysis. Bell's analysis, therefore, may

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[3]For Bell the (authentic or liberated) "imperial self" is a poor source of meaning: The unsocialized pathology of the unconscious lacks reason and judgment (cf. Arendt, 1981). The "imperial self" plays an important role in the (operant) axial principle of the culture of advanced capitalism--modernism.

provide insight into the "environmental" context of such disputes in education that systems theory, for example, cannot.[4]

The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism

The notion of contradiction has been most powerfully defined by Marx, building on the work of Hegel (and, less directly, on Marx's own study of pre-Socratic and Socratic philosophy). For Marx, contradictions in the political economy are the driving, but invisible, force of history. In the Marxian analysis, contradictions are dialectical tensions in the structure of the political economy that are dealt with historically, principally through class struggle.[5]

Political economy, determinism, and class struggle. Although the Marxian view is determinist, in the sense that political-economic contradictions (an aspect of social structure) ordinarily compel individuals toward predictable ends, organized class struggle provides extraordinary (that is, out of the

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[4]Note that the economy and the operant culture embody contradictory values: utility and rationality (in the economy) versus hedonism and anti-intellectualism (in the modernist culture) (Bell, 1976. p. 37). If schools derive the content of education from culture, then hedonism and anti-intellectual will comprise non-cognitive elements of schooling. Etzioni's vision of non-cognitive training, however, originates in the techno-economic realm rather than in the culture. In the terms of Bell's analysis, Etzioni's view that schools overemphasize cognitive tasks is short-sighted, and his criticism is misdirected. In fact, schools are arguably more concerned with children's socio-emotional states (i.e., their "happiness" and sociability) than with their intellect. My colleagues and I have elsewhere (A. Howley, 1986; C. Howley, 1987; Pendarvis, Howley, & Howley, 1990) suggested that anti-intellectualism and hedonism vitiate programs for talented students in American schools.

[5]Heilbroner (1980, p. 31) points up the ongoing nature of such tension when he refers to the "relentless" give-and-take of the concept of "dialectics." Contradiction in Bell and Marx adheres to this quality of relentlessness, and it encompasses the more temporally-bound concept of "conflict" (cf. Dahrendorf, 1959; Parsons, 1960).

ordinary--or "revolutionary") opportunities for influencing the way in which political contradictions, and thus the personal destinies determined by such contradictions, are resolved. It is important to understand that, in the Marxian view (and also in Bell's view), any existing society is characterized by contradictions, since contradictions are inherent in social structure itself. The resolution of extant contradictions, in this view, must merely give rise to new ones. Contradictions, at least in the Marxian view, are the structural conditions that make progress inevitable.[6] Bell views contradictions as dangerous, since he (1) rejects the teleology of progress, (2) does not examine the class struggle, and (3) considers the culture--rather than the political economy--the realm in which the contradictions of advanced capitalist society might be resolved in the name of justice.

"Political economy" is a term that must be understood in order to grasp the significance of Bell's analysis of the cultural contradictions of capitalism. In brief, political economy considers the interplay of economic and social forces, whereas its descendant, neoclassical economics, is the technical discipline used in the modern era to consider purely monetary relationships (Bowles, Gordon, & Weiskopf, 1984; Heilbroner, 1985). Neoclassical economics is based on the assumption that human beings act rationally to maximize economic benefits, or "utilities" in the jargon of neoclassical economics (Heilbroner & Thurow, 1985).

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[6]One might, indeed, ask, "What is the end of such progress?" In Marx, it was the ideal communist society, which would somehow be classless, and, thus, free of contradictions. Rejection of this teleology--that is, the perfection logically implied by progress--is perhaps Bell's most cogent quarrel with the Marxist view. Bell's theme of the recursion ("ricorso") of culture--specifically culture's timeless role in observing and seeking meaning in the human condition--is also the theoretical ground of his stand against Marx.

The scope of political economy is wider because it views the economy as a set of social relationships and money--and especially capital--as the medium used to transact (or, in Marx, to obscure and enforce) those relationships. Contemporary neo-Marxists (e.g., Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bowles, Gordon, & Weiskopf, 1984; Wright, 1979, 1985) criticize neoclassical economics as a simplified "clockwork" that ignores the social relationships embedded in the economy.[7]

The role of ("high") culture. Bell's criticism, on the other hand, finds in such a divergence a more general problem. In his analysis--notable for its anti-Marxism--the divergence of economy and political economy must be understood as but one manifestation of the entropy of capitalist culture in general. Despite his dim view of the contemporary followers of Marx, Bell (1976) concludes that a general contradiction--the disjunction of realms--now characterizes capitalist societies. This general contradiction has particular implications for culture as Bell defines it. The three dimensions form a web of contradictory tendencies more complex--and, in the modern era, ultimately more threatening to capitalism--than those described by Marx.

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[7]Whereas Bell's analyses of culture derive from the classical philosophical concepts of epistemology and ethics, his analyses of the contemporary polity and economy typically derive from the conventional positivist constructs of sociology. This theoretical derivation of his views of the economy and polity may help account for Bell's avoidance of the construct, "political economy." Indeed, according to Bell (1990, p. 47), "Marxism is the joining of economics to politics [whereas] Fascism juxtaposes culture to politics." Nonetheless, he acknowledges that "the economy is no longer subject to traditional or moral rules (e.g., 'the just price'), but is an autonomous activity, operating within its own self-contained boundaries, subject to its own laws, just as the discipline of economics itself comes to be a set of self-contained concepts, detached from institutions" [emphasis added] (Bell, 1990, p. 45). In an ethical frame, perhaps these are views of the same issue from different standpoints: the Marxian analysis finds evil in the social relationships implicit in economic production; Bell's analysis finds evil in the intellectual relationships implicit in cultural consumption.

What is new in Bell's analysis is his careful exegesis on ("high") culture, a social phenomenon largely ignored the followers of Marx as a determined (and second-order) effect of social relationships obscured in capital, a function of the political economy. In a famous phrase Marx asserted, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; the point is to change it" (Marx, 1947, p. 199). His analysis of the structural contradictions of the capitalist political economy rendered culture less inherently interesting to him, since culture seemed to him less useful (even counter-productive) for advancing the class struggle of the proletariat.

Whereas Marx viewed culture as tangential to social progress, Bell views it as essential. According to Bell, only culture can provide the meanings and values that will ensure the continued pursuit of justice (by the polity) and of productivity (by the economy). The neo-Marxian view of culture falls prey, he implies, to the very contradictions it would resolve for the social good.

Contradictions within the cultural realm. Bell views the cultural realm, narrowly defined, as dangerously tense. Culture breathes meaning into individual and, especially, social relationships, much as in Barnard (1968), the informal organization breathes life into the formal organization. "Progress" in culture, however, differs radically from progress in the techno-economic realm (a point most Marxian analysis, shackled--in Bell's view--by devotion to a clockwork political-economic determinism, fails to appreciate). Whereas utility and efficiency provide comparatively unambiguous rules for innovation in the techno-economic realm, no such simple rules direct cultural progress. According to Bell,

> In culture there is always a ricorso, a return to the concerns and questions that are the existential agonies of human beings. Though the answers may change, the forms they take may derive from the other changes in society. In different times, the answers may vary, or they may be recast in new aesthetic forms. But there is no unambiguous "principle" of change. Boulez does not replace Bach. The new music or the new painting or the new poetry becomes part of an enlarged repertoire of mankind, a permanent depository from which individuals can draw, in renewable fashion, to remold aesthetic experience.
>
> (Bell, 1976, p. 13)

Culture pursues, establishes, and continually augments consideration of the fundamental concerns of the human intellect and human heart, including matters of value and faith. In so doing, it treats--or ought, in Bell's view, to treat--the fundamental existential dilemmas that confront humankind.[8] These issues are ignored by the techno-economic realm as impractical and by the polity as unrepresentative and elitist (cf. Marcuse, 1978).[9] For example,

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[8]The sciences may, at first glance, seem to belong more to the techno-economic realm than to the realm of culture. The "pure" sciences, however, differ from their derivative technologies. This distinction is no longer made so frequently as it once was (precisely on the basis of the intuition that it is "unrepresentative," in Bell's phrase). Many mathematicians, physicists, and biologists have, however, written of the aesthetic experience of their work and reflected on its connections to the cultural themes elaborated by Bell (e.g., Gould, 1980, 1981; Hawking, 1988; Weiner, 1950). The term "elegance" in scientific theorizing, although generally understood to refer to the technical requirements of parsimonious explanation (cf. Bell, 1976, p. 98), also denotes the objective aesthetic principle of scientific expression.

[9]Neo-Marxian critics typically take a more "anthropological" view of culture than Bell (e.g., Anyon, 1980; Apple, 1979; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983), in which culture becomes the educational process itself (knowledge as mediated by the social relations of student and teacher). This (constructionist) view treats culture as educational praxis. Bell's (historicist) view treats education as cultural theory. Both views, however, represent culture to be a force for social cohesion and meaning--one in everyday (profane) practice, the other in transcendent (sacred) theory (cf. Bell, 1976, pp. 155-171). Moreover, both Gramsci (1971, p. 27, pp. 42-43, with respect to the school curriculum) and Marcuse (1978, pp. 5-14, with respect to the life of the mind) credit the critical role of traditional--or transcendent--cultural themes. Marcuse notes, "Compared with the often one-dimensional optimism of propaganda, art is permeated with pessimism, not seldom intertwined with comedy. Its 'liberating laughter' recalls the danger

basic research in the sciences is not typically funded (by the representative polity, operating on the techo-economic principle of utility) until promising applications, of imputed benefit to representative numbers of citizens, can be anticipated.

The dangerous tensions of capitalist culture derive from the uncoupling of the work ethic and the rewards of work. Bell's conception of the work ethic, however, stresses the socially binding role of culture (a "re-linking,"--i.e., literally "re-ligious"--sense of the social compact), rather than an imputed, unreflective, or normative sense of externally imposed obligation. A hedonistic, atomized culture undermines the social compact, reinforcing the alienation of individuals and structuring an immoral (instrumental) sense of what work is for.[10] Indeed, notes Bell, though work dominates virtually all adults' waking time, work itself is hardly ever a serious object of consideration in modern fiction (Bell, 1973, p. 95). For Bell, this oversight is a dangerous sign.

Modernism--as a cultural movement--exemplifies this uncoupling for Bell. Modernism seeks to replace the abstraction of aesthetic form with the immediacy of experience (cf. Marcuse, 1978 for a similar critique). In so

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and the evil that have passed--this time!" (Marcuse, 1978, p. 14).

[10] Seldom can the content of work (like the content of learning) validate itself in advanced capitalist societies. For example, although work roles are structured by the principles of functional rationality, seldom do persons perform their work roles in the name of functional rationality. Work in advanced capitalist societies--in part through the mechanism of functional rationality--loses its inherent meaning (the sense of "vocation," or sacred calling). Persons normally assume work roles for instrumental purposes, as a means to an end capable of justifying (or narcotizing) the anomie inherent in the work role. For most persons, leisure is the end that justifies the boredom, alienation, and anomie of the work role. Tragically, the cultural prerogatives of hedonism and anti-intellectualism apply to the normal use of leisure time.

doing, it loses the contemplative qualities--the sense of ricorso--that enrich culture:

> The extraordinary point is that in all the arts...the modernist impulse has a common syntax of expression....It is...the eclipse of distance between the spectator and the artist, between the aesthetic experience and the work of art....The breakup of aesthetic experience means that one has lost control over the experience--the ability to step back and conduct one's "dialogue" with the art....This is necessarily the case, since the effects that are created derive not from content (some transcendental call, a transfiguration, or a purgation through tragedy or suffering), but almost entirely from technique.
>
> (Bell, 1976, pp. 116-118)

The modernist emphasis on the immediacy of experience and technique emasculates culture as a cohesive social force and undercuts the essential role of culture in addressing the enduring questions of human existence.[11] Bell's analysis suggests that the market economy (the "economizing mode" in Bell's phrase) of capitalism itself undermines the social cohesion of advanced capitalist societies, and that the cultural contradictions--as opposed to political-economic contradictions--are the most telling.

This analysis is complex, but basically, the argument includes four interconnected themes. First, modernist culture (that is, contemporary capitalist culture) is an adversary culture that defines itself by its repudiation of tradition. Second, modernist culture (perhaps as a post-

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[11] In Bell's view science (as distinguished from technology) is the exception to this rule. Science proceeds more or less firmly on the basis of tradition toward an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the order of the universe. However, both its general scope (which might be termed "natural history" at root) and its general method (the search for elegant laws expressed in the language of mathematics) necessarily exclude speculation about the human condition. Speculation of this order is obviously of critical importance for dealing with such issues as justice, equity, and the meaning of life and death. Science, in short, is too frail a vehicle for consideration of all cultural issues.

romantic phenomenon) is hedonistic and anti-intellectual. It seeks to substitute the thrill of unmediated experience for reflection or contemplation, dissolving the notion of expressive form that is the traditional boundary between art (or knowledge) and life. Third, modernist culture, in its quest for "authenticity," values the idiosyncracies of individual experience over the commonalities of the human condition. Finally (and ironically, given its quest for authenticity), modernist culture forgoes the representation of content (mimesis), which leads it to emphasize technique.

The contradictions within the culture of capitalism reside principally in the way culture has, via modernism, become uncoupled with tradition. Capitalist culture has, in Bell's view, lost its center (Bell, 1976, pp. 102-105)--the construction of the meanings and values that allow any functional society to deal successfully with the enduring dilemmas of the human condition.

Contradictions between culture and the other realms. Contradictions exist not only within the cultural realm, but also between the cultural realm and the other realms. In Bell's analysis the cultural realm becomes increasingly uncoupled with the techno-economic realm, as the case of "mass culture" illustrates (cf. Bell, 1976, p. 99). Mass "culture" is not, of course, culture at all in Bell's view. Mass culture, which has enormous utility in the techno-economic realm, is divided from traditional culture by a

wide gulf of convention.[12] It is representative (that is, both participative and mimetic [imitative]), immediate (both quick and accessible), and entertaining (both distracting and amusing). Mass culture conforms to the techno-economic principle of utility. It distracts the public from considering the existential dilemmas that lurk beneath the surface of the fragmented polity, and, through its normative appeal, provides a profitable milieu for corporate enterprise.

In this dynamic of culture, the central meaning--the axial principle, if you will--of culture is lost. It is claimed by neither mass nor modernist culture. Moreover, modernism, which might--with better justification than mass culture--reclaim a role in the construction of meaning, both rejects its traditional intellectual roots[13] and celebrates the triviality of the mass culture (as in the "pop art" of the 1960s and 1970s). Needless to say, these contradictions between the cultural and the techno-economic realm are intense, in Bell's analysis.

In the polity (the axial principle of which is participation or representativeness), culture becomes a private matter. Individuals confront an array of expressive forms and styles, none of which can or ought to be distinguished from one another as more or less worthy. To do so would be to

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[12]One of the contradictions of modernist culture, in Bell's view, is that mass culture and "high" culture come to resemble one another more and more (as the reader may infer from the list in the next sentence; cf. Bell, 1976, pp. 129-130). This movement, however, is not cultural implosion. Instead, it is based on a disordered profusion of styles, tastes, genres, and traditions.

[13]The historical roots of modernism clearly lie in romanticism, and Bell identifies modernist notions in the works of Flaubert (in literature), Wagner (in music), and Cezanne (in fine art).

invade an individual's privacy.[14] The worth of a particular form or style lies not in the thing itself (or its content or in the issues with which it deals), but in the "individual consumer." Since capitalist culture has abandoned social meaning as an axial principle, this scope for private taste comes to be acknowledged as common sense. As culture is "privatized" in this way, art, literature, and even knowledge (as interpretive meaning) become areas of the human experience that are not properly subject to public discussion, since they offend common sense (cf. Bell, 1976, pp. 129-130).

Nonetheless, many observers, both before Bell (1976) and after him (e.g., Giroux, 1983; Gramsci, 1971; Habermas, 1968; Wilson, 1940) have attempted to extend the Marxian analysis into the realm of culture. None of these other analyses takes the narrow view of culture characteristic of Bell. Bell (1976), in a perhaps telling revelation, claims that he is a radical in economics, a liberal in politics, and a conservative in culture (because he credits tradition and authority in cultural matters).[15]

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[14]Bell actually puts the issues somewhat differently, as follows: "The loss of social distance means the loss of manners and the erosion of civility, which has made contact between persons manageable and allowed individuals to have a 'walking space' of their own. In the leveling that ensues, distinctions of speech, taste, and style become erased, so that any one usage, or grammar, is as good as any other. In the personal sense, loss of social distance means an invasion of privacy, in increasing inability to maintain formal relations with others where desirable, to escape the crowd, or to define one's task and work as one's own. In mobilized societies, the individual is submerged in the Party, the group, or the commune. In the hedonistic societies of the West, there is an emphasis on surface relationships and on quick exchanges between individuals that are mediated by personality and appearances" [emphases added] (pp. 117-118).

[15]None of the neo-Marxist critics, of course, would dare submit to such a personalized "disjunction of realms." Despite their reluctance, Marxists have never been very clear (even in theory) about what a "radical" culture might be, as Marcuse's (1978) discussion implies. Aesthetic form necessarily distances the observer from observed reality and closes the distance with alternative (past, present, and future) realities. Hence, art is inherently both adversarial and traditional. Bell, in his condemnation of modernism and

Applicability of the Theory to Schooling

Other observers have decried the bureaucratic character of the schools (e.g., Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Collins, 1979; Cremin, 1961) or objected to educators' overt attempts to inculcate specifically useful (usually nefariously useful) non-cognitive traits in schools (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Katz, 1971; but cf. Committee for Economic Development, 1985; Etzioni, 1985). No recent critic other than Bell has developed the theoretical scope, however, for considering such issues in the context of "high" culture. Practical functionaries (e.g., Bennett, 1987, 1988) or committed academics (e.g., Adler, 1982) espouse the high culture as the content of education, but usually without a sophisticated theory of culture.

The question is not so much the oft-repeated one of whether or not the process of education is itself a science or an art (cf. Gage, 1979), though this issue clearly has interesting cultural implications. Instead, the main question is whether or not the content of education should principally encompass culture and all it entails (art and knowledge in Bell's narrow definition). Related questions concern the relationship of cultural content to the process of education (the nurture of immature minds) and the relationship of content and process to the purposes to which educated minds are applied within the social structure. Phrasing the questions in this way violates conventional wisdom, which views education as a technical conveyance for reaching whatever goals the polity might determine in advance of specifying any educational content or process.

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his now dated criticism of the "sensibility of the sixties," is less sensitive to this point than he might otherwise have been.

Bell's theoretical framework, however, suggests that an alternative view of the relationship between educational content, process, and goals is possible. The following principles apply:

- First, in Bell's view the content of education is implicit in the culture (with its dangerous tensions in advanced capitalist societies).
- Second, the process of education attempts to induct students into culture (with "disjunct" results for many American students).
- Third, the goals of education pertain more to what society does or can do with culture thus maintained and extended (i.e., to the extent that it is maintained and extended).

In particular, the cultural legacy ought, in Bell's view, to shape what schools do (i.e., their goals; cf. Bell 1973, pp. 419-433). In fact, Bell argues, the cultural legacy is the richest, most comprehensive, and most circumspect source of images of desirable future states of being. More typically, however, schools are conceived by the polity as a tabula rasa on which to impress any particular set of instrumental purposes (largely political and economic, rather than cultural, purposes). In this more typical treatment, Bell (1973, 1976) implies, the roles of culture and of education are obscured in schools; others (Grubb, 1985; Stronach, 1988) note that, in pursuing instrumental aims, schools also misrepresent the nature of both the polity and the economy.

The Disjunction of Educational Goals and Culture

The preceding principles imply a conception of organizational goals that differs from the conventional one (e.g., Simon, 1964). The conventional view posits a hierarchical path through which organizational goals are interpreted

to teachers, and by them to students, whose "changed behavior" becomes an operationalized "output" reflective of goal attainment.

In the conventional (rationalistic) mode, goals take precedence over the content of education; indeed, the content must vary according to goals that are most often derived under the pressure of economic and political exigencies. If the content does not vary as the goals vary, then the polity can justly accuse educators of being unrepresentative and nonresponsive.

Virtually any goal can influence content (e.g., retooling the workforce, reestablishing American economic primacy, achieving cost efficiency, stemming the flow of early school-leavers, and so forth). The cultural legacy, in this conception, is a specialized content reserved for an elite group of students.

Curriculum and instruction: Content and process. The cultural contradictions of capitalism affect both curriculum (content to be made accessible to students) and instruction (the process by which content is made accessible). Good instruction, at least in Bell's view, cannot take place without good curriculum; but with Bell the curriculum must consider the cultural legacy (Bell, 1973, pp. 419-423) to be the body of knowledge that preserves and extends universal ("sacred" or transcendent) meaning. Effective instruction, in this view, would comprise the routines that make the content of education (e.g., the cultural legacy) accessible to students.

Recall that, in Bell's view, the culture of modernism displaces contemplation of artistic form with the thrill of immediate experience (Bell, 1976, p. 117) and an emphasis on technique to the detriment of content. A similar dynamic besets schooling, and the key phrases are "experience" and "relevance." Experiential instructional methods (cf. Wigginton, 1985), while

powerful motivators of learning, have, as instructional methods, a limited scope. The experiential method of itself does not define the curriculum, nor can it be the principal instructional strategy with which to consider all of history, literature, higher mathematics, foreign languages, or science.[16]

Instruction--as the method by which knowledge is made accessible to students--is a delicate and difficult process of balancing challenge and reward, of keeping ends and means simultaneously in sight. In Bell's view, however, educators tend to equate diversity of experience and enlightenment (attainment of significant knowledge). Experience, however, is not knowledge in Bell's view. Instead,

> knowledge is the selective ordering--and reordering--of experience through relevant concepts. Reality is not a bounded world, "out there," to be imprinted on the mind as from a mirror, or a flux of experience to be sampled for its novelties according to one's inclination (or its relevance for "me"), but a set of meanings organized by the mind.
> (Bell, 1973, p. 422)

As the experiential base of schooling expands, (e.g., vocational education; "cooperative" education; mentorships; career education) knowledge is debased to the status of a technicality (i.e., knowledge as information). And the measure of the worth of any bit of information is its relevance to experience! Experience--especially the subjective experience of the authentic self--in this way becomes the touchstone of knowledge: "What works"

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[16]At the same time, experiential methods could be much more widely used to improve instruction in more traditional academic subjects such as these. The question is one of balance and interpretation, rather than the whether or not learning by doing is "more effective" than other modes of learning (reading, thinking, writing). As Bell notes, though knowledge and experience are related, they are not the same--one cannot serve in the other's stead.

(especially for the idiosyncratic individual) is sought more than "what makes sense" (for an idealized human being).[17]

Curriculum and instruction: The higher- and lower-orders. For Bell, justice is the critical issue facing post-industrial society. Although justice and equality are major problems in any society (Bell, 1973; Carnoy, 1982), the fragmented and specialized curricula of the schools reflect not only the cultural disjunctions of capitalist society, but the disjunct curricula threaten to reinforce political disjunctions as well.

American schools are segregated by class and race according to residential patterns (Jencks et al., 1979). The children of workers (the lower orders) get essentialism--basic skills stripped of context and meaning--and the children of elites (the higher orders) get the perennialist curriculum based on the cultural legacy (Anyon, 1987; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Wilcox, 1982; Wilcox & Moriarity, 1977). Many (perhaps most) educators therefore denounce perennialism--the curriculum of the cultural legacy--as either an instrument of oppression or as an increasingly irrelevant body of knowledge (e.g., Carnoy, 1982; Giroux, 1983; McLuhan, 1964; Toffler, 1970).

Liberal and radical objections to the perennialist curriculum, however, are founded on the misperception that the perennialist curriculum alone, and not the basic skills curriculum, is elitist. Some observers--and many teachers and administrators--fail to realize that both perennialism (the higher-order curriculum) and essentialism (the lower-order curriculum)

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[17]Utility and novelty (techno-economic experiences of what works) or representativeness and power (political experiences of what works) become the criteria for selecting "useful information" (i.e., debased knowledge) in the economizing mode (also cf. Bell, 1990, p. 47, on the theoretical importance of the "ceaseless urge to 'make it new'").

together reproduce the social divisions of American society as result of the way in which contemporary American schools are organized (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Grubb, 1985; Oakes, 1985).

The instructional methods commonly associated with both the perennialist and essentialist curriculum are condemned by many observers (e.g., Adler, 1982; Keizer, 1988; Wigginton, 1985; Wilcox & Moriarity, 1982). Given the disjunctions of the curriculum, the ascendancy of experience over knowledge, and problems of cultural access in general, it is difficult to see how public schools engage students in the "selective ordering and reordering" for the purpose of constructing a "set of meanings." Such instruction is more difficult to achieve widely than inculcation of essential skills, for which so many specific formulas exist (see Joyce et al., 1983, for the familiar list).

For this reason it is telling that the failure to create an equitable distribution of essential skills in the workforce[18] is the major on-going criticism directed at the schools by representatives of the political and techno-economic realms (e.g., Committee for Economic Development, 1985; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). While ignoring their major cultural mission (according to Bell), schools also in the more limited mission. Neo-Marxian observers (e.g., Bowles & Gintis, 1976) would point out that schools are supposed to fail in this way: they teach children their places in the adult world, in which some citizens are winners and some are losers. Bell would, perhaps, point to the larger failure as the cause of the more narrow failure. In his view, the hedonism and anti-intellectualism of

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[18]Human capital theory--as a specialization of neoclassical economics--treats students as sites of skill development. Hence, the educational problem of basic skills may be viewed as a techno-economic problem of distribution rather than as the cultural problem of human meanings and values.

the cultural realm doom schools even to fail in the more narrow task of training basic skills. Children, unlike adult workers, cannot find a justification sufficient for performing a role (i.e., the role of student) that feels alienating and boring. As unreflective creatures of the culture, children know from an early age that the irrelevance of schoolwork is the mark of a deficient experience.

Culture and the Effectiveness of Schooling

The preceding discussion suggests that assessments of the effectiveness of schooling based on the attainment of organizational goals is misguided. Three contradictions are apparent. First, goals do not reflect the proper content of education. Second, the operative goals of schools (e.g., reproduction of existing inequities, restoration of global economic domination, compliance training, provision of custodial care) are not ethically worthy. Finally, Bell (1973) contends, education's proper realm is culture, for all that schools try (in vain!) to conform to techno-economic goals imposed on them by a hypothetically representative polity.

Education's proper realm, Bell contends, is culture. If education belongs to the realm of culture, then schools arguably are the most visible social institutions for the maintenance and extension of culture (as art and knowledge). The source of culture is not, however, the school itself. The culture--to which schools would, under Bell's conception, provide students access--is something the school must appropriate from outside itself.

This condition suggests that--at least in this analytic mode--the effectiveness schooling may be better gauged by the extent to which it gathers the necessary resources to make the cultural legacy accessible to students.

Several resources are relevant to this analysis, chief of which is access to the cultural legacy itself. Additional resources include the fiscal and human resources provided by the polity for the operation of schools. In addition, the social capital (Coleman, 1988a, 1988b) that supports students' commitment to understanding the cultural legacy outside of school is especially relevant.

Impediments to the schools' appropriation of culture are both internal and external. The external impediments are potentially the most debilitating to the educational mission. They include (1) access to the culture itself and (2) the erosion in advanced capitalist societies of the "social capital" that both maintains the cultural legacy and extends that legacy through its "investment" in education (cf. Coleman, 1988a, 1988b). Internal impediments, though less serious, necessarily have a more immediate debilitating effect; in part, they serve as blinders to protect educators from perception of the more general, external impediments. Important internal impediments include (1) limited human resources and (2) the economizing mode (i.e., limited fiscal resources). Each of these four impediments is considered next, respectively.

Access to culture. Impediments to the schools' appropriation of culture are both internal and external. The most serious cultural threat, in Bell's analysis, is external. Contemporary capitalist culture is hedonistic, egocentric, anti-intellectual, and adversarial. It turns its back on both its historical legacy and on representation of the human condition. It is neither contemplative nor reflexive, as it should properly be in order to conform to the axial principle that gives definition to any culture. If schools seek to appropriate only the (modernist) culture, they will also appropriate the contradictions that negate apprehension of the cultural legacy--the cohesive, traditional culture still accessible to a few advantaged individuals.

Access to social capital. James Coleman (1988a, 1988b) proposes the construct of "social capital" to explain why similar children in comparable schools achieve at different levels. The construct is the educational analogy of "human capital" in neo-classical economics. Just as human capital accounted for hitherto unexplained variance in Gross National Product, so social capital is offered to account for hitherto unexplained variance in student achievement. Whether the new construct will lend itself to successful application and replicable results remains to be seen.

Nonetheless, the construct has cultural derivations and implications is appropriately included in this analysis. Coleman's insight arises from his comparative study of Catholic and public high schools. Among the differences in the two cohorts of schools, Coleman noted the involvement of parents, grandparents, and neighbors in their own and others' children upbringing, characteristic of Catholic, but not public, schools (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987).

For the purposes of this essay, the possible access social capital might have provided to the cultural legacy of Catholicism is most intriguing. The curriculum tends more toward perennialism than essentialism in Catholic schools than in public schools, though instructional methods are not are not very different, and the desiderata of utility, and--especially--efficiency are very much in place (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). At the same time, many Catholic schools enroll minority students to the same extent as public schools.

Catholic schools may be an example of schools that face fewer problems in accessing the cultural legacy. According to Coleman's findings, students tend to perform better in Catholic schools because intergenerational networks reinforce norms of scholarship. In Adolescent Society (1961) Coleman had stated the alternative view with respect to public schools:

> The average boy, as an individual, appears to be more oriented to scholarship than is the social system of the high school. The norms of the system constitute more than an aggregate of individual attitudes; they actually pull these attitudes away from scholarship. The implication is striking: The adolescents themselves are not be to held responsible for the norms of their adolescent cultures.
>
> (Coleman, 1961, p. 304)

Whether or not the construct of social capital will prove equally useful in accounting for student achievement in public schools--where access to the cultural legacy may be less direct than in Catholic schools--remains to be seen. Nevertheless, the intergenerational care and nurture of children is, as Coleman and many others have noted, not a feature of life in advanced capitalist nations. The erosion of social capital must, as it affects education, be regarded as yet another cultural contradiction to be investigated within advanced capitalism.[19]

Access to human resources. The chief internal threat to cultural access concerns teachers' and principals' personal internalization of the cultural legacy. The culture, properly dealt with in schools, is an accumulation of knowledge and a reflection (by students and teachers alike) on that cumulation[20]. School staff, however, are not educated (before they themselves become educators) to be transmit--or even to value--the cultural legacy

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[19]Bell pays scant attention to such issues, however. He deals with all such practical questions, after Joseph Schumpeter, under the rubric of "fiscal sociology," the history of how the advanced capitalist State balances the imperative to accumulate capital and the burgeoning needs of both individuals and the interest groups that represent them. He suggests that the post-industrial world will require a definition of positive "group rights" (e.g., as of children) that will to some extent supercede the negative "individual rights" of the liberal polity (Bell, 1976, pp. 196-198).

[20]Such reflection may be, as in Bell (1973), a reflection on the accumulated legacy, or as in Giroux (1983), on the process of cumulation in which students and teachers engage mutually.

(Schlecthy & Vance, 1983; Weaver, 1983). Moreover, subsequent socialization within the profession reinforces teachers' alienation from the cultural legacy (Brown, 1967; Kuhlman & Hoy, 1974; Lortie, 1975). Finally, teachers most likely to leave the profession may well be those with the strongest links to the cultural legacy (cf. Weaver, 1983). In short, the "culture" of schools is itself an impediment to access to the cultural legacy.

Access to fiscal resources. In education, fiscal resources are needed to provide those most inefficient of human resources, personal interaction and contemplation (cf. Hage, 1965). Thus, another internal threat concerns the prevalent influence of the economizing mode (the principles and structures of the techno-economic realm) within schools. This influence inevitably tends to subvert the role of schools as social institutions that maintain and extend culture. As Bell notes, the progress of culture is not based on the economizing principles of innovation, efficiency, or utility; nonetheless these very principles characterize American education (DeYoung, 1989; Spring, 1985; Tyack, 1974).

Innovation relates to the concern of American business with novelty. In business, novelty is associated with the development and marketing of new products. In education, novelty is reflected in the enduring preoccupation of educators with the reform of schooling (Cuban, 1982; Katz, 1968, 1971; Spring, 1986).[21] Educational innovations translate directly into new products, which are usually produced by private enterprise. When public funds support the development of new educational products, private enterprise benefits twice. The most successful innovations in American education have arisen during the

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[21]. Many observers refer to educational fads. See Mitchell (1979) for a literate and amusing view of educational fads.

most conservative political eras: the beginnings of consolidation and the common school (1840-1860); scientific management (1890-1920); new math and science curricula (late 1950s); and school effectiveness (1980s) (Callahan, 1962; Cremin, 1961; Cuban, 1985; Katz, 1968; Spring, 1986).

Efficiency encompasses the consensus about operations. Efficiency refers, at base, to completion of a required function for the least possible cost. In industrial operations, quality control is able to determine when increased efficiency interferes with quality. No such standards exist in education. The influential Rand Corporation summed up contemporary educational attitudes about efficiency in 1974:

> Increasing expenditures on traditional educational practices is not likely to improve educational outcomes substantially. There seem to be opportunities for significant reduction or redirection of educational expenditures without deterioration in educational outcomes.
> (Averch et al., 1974, pp. 171-175)

Utility is the principle that justifies the instrumental goals set for schools by the polity. With respect to culture, the principle of utility demands that schools demonstrate what function students' knowledge of the cultural legacy would serve before funds might be allocated for that purpose. While the perennialist curriculum, as suggested above, is most often viewed as the preserve of academically talented students, it is interesting to observe <u>how few</u> programs for talented children actually address the cultural legacy (A. Howley, 1986; C. Howley, 1987). Apparently, even when viewed as appropriate, such a curriculum is not considered to be useful.

Hence, the external and internal cultural threats to <u>content</u> also make themselves felt in the <u>process</u> of schooling, namely the internal organization of schools, districts, and state and national systems of "education." The

history of American education, as Tyack (1974) tells it, is the search for standardized educational procedures, "the one best system." Today, the techno-economic principles of utility, efficiency, and innovation characterize the operation of virtually all American schools (cf. Cremin, 1961, 1980; DeYoung, 1989; Katz, 1971; Spring, 1976; Tyack, 1974). Standardized schooling reduces teachers' autonomy (Katz, 1971; McNeil, 1985; Samuels, 1970; Smith & DeYoung, 1988; Wigginton, 1985) and deprives communities of influence over the fiscal and human resources that support the education of their children (Dunne, 1983; Sher, 1977, 1986).

Schools as Unlikely Sites of Education

The way in which access to the content of education is denied schools, and the way in which the process of education reinforces that denial, suggests that the institutional role of schools in maintaining and extending the cultural legacy has become problematic. The location of the culture outside the schools implies that education is not to be found only in contemporary schools, as observers are wont to note (e.g., Bell, 1973; Cremin, 1980; Spring, 1985).

A compelling argument can, in fact, be made--on the basis of Bell's analysis--that schools face barriers that make them unlikely sites for education. Three tendencies constitute these barriers: (1) the privatization of the culture (in the sense articulated by Bell); (2) the uncoupling of the work ethic and the rewards of work (with the emphasis intended by Bell, and noted above); and (3) the denigration of learning in favor of unmediated experience by the "representative" polity. These barriers contradict the school's role as the primary social institution for maintaining and extending

the culture.

The privatization of culture is perhaps the most stifling influence on education. It represents the schools' loss of authority and legitimacy in the cultural realm. When culture is made the private preserve of the "authentic" individual, a formal social institution for the maintenance and extension of culture is no longer needed. Of course, the informal institutions of the mass culture are thus freed to serve as sources for the authority and legitimacy still desperately needed by the presumably authentic, but "deracinated," individual (Bell, p. 119), an eventuality that contributes to the culture's further estrangement from the educative function.

The uncoupling of the work ethic and the rewards of work is not quite so Calvinistic an observation as it seems. The observation concerns the inherent ("sacred," in Weber's language, or "transcendent," in Bell's formulation) meaning of life (work) and knowledge. At root, this cultural observation pertains to the loss of truth, as something grounded in the objective world. In a culture sundered from a vision of the truth, neither work, nor any lived experience, nor knowledge, nor art can pretend significance that transcends itself. The inevitably painful quality of real learning, then, becomes a mere unpleasantness, to be avoided if possible. The uncoupling of the work ethic and the rewards of work destroys the motive for learning.

As the motive for learning is lost, individuals derive satisfaction from the phantasmagoria of experiences and simulated experiences marketed in the mass culture. The schools are as subject to such market forces (i.e., "such economizing forces") as any enterprise. As students' willingness to suffer the pain of reading, writing, or conceptualizing mathematical ideas becomes more and more attenuated under the influence of the hedonistic, anti-

intellectual culture, schools seek to "motivate" learning by displacing learning with experience. When this happens, a cycle of cultural devolution (as opposed to cultural extension) is closed.

The key point--for schools and for the young citizens who pass through them--is access to the culture. Such access, of course, requires a coherent culture as a precondition. In Bell's analysis, the "cultural mass"[22] (which includes the professorate), is an impediment to access to the cultural legacy. Though a coherent cultural legacy still exist, Bell implies, the cultural mass" tends to view that legacy adversarially (or, on occasion, instrumentally, as a source of private profit). On the other hand, the very structure of schools presents an additional impediment to students' access to the cultural legacy, even if schools in general--and school staff in particular--were able to gain access to that legacy.

Bell's analysis, then, implies that access to the cultural legacy--which ought by reason to be the principal content of schooling--is effectively denied by the cultural contradictions of contemporary capitalism. At the same time, this analysis makes clear that this ineffectiveness is not only or mainly the schools' failure to realize cognitive goals. Advanced capitalism contains historically and structurally inherent barriers to the achievement of cognitive goals. The most critical barrier is the fact that schools are cut off from the very culture that constitutes the object and subject of their mission. At least on the terms of Bell's analysis, there can be little doubt

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[22]"By 'cultural mass' I mean...an audience large enough to sustain a world of cultural production on its own....Sociologically it comprises...the transmitters [of culture]....a market for culture....and the group which...produces the popular materials for the wider mass-culture" (Bell, 1976, p. 20).

that schools fail to educate students.

On the other hand, schools' dysfunctional features with respect to the culture are the same features that make schools functional in the techno-economic realm. With achievement the measure of cognitive success, a number of studies have shown that schools tend to operate in the area of increasing returns to investment (e.g., Kenny, 1982). There is little doubt that schools operate efficiently, and, in consideration of the quality of students' social background, perhaps fatalistically.[23] This efficiency, therefore, tends to reinforce ("reproduce") the social inequities (and cultural disjunctions) that characterize advanced capitalist society in general (cf. Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Wright, 1979, 1985).

Alternatives

Should one take Bell's view, and its implications for schools, seriously? If so, can anything "practical" be inferred to help teachers or administrators? The answers to such questions are necessarily personal views, and must be understood as such. I will, however, provide supporting evidence when possible.

Should one take Bell's views seriously? Bell's views are already somewhat dated. The weaknesses of his critique is twofold.

First, the more serious weakness concerns Bell's ready confusion of American capitalism with capitalism in general. Bell wrote in an era when

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[23]The area of increasing returns to investment is restricted by such background variables as education of parents, students' racial background, and socioeconomic status of parents. Schools operate "fatalistically" by accepting these restraints as inevitable. Of course, the school effectiveness movement (ignoring the complexity of the teacher effects literature) exhorts all teachers to maintain high "expectations" for all students--and remains ignorant of the resources necessary to render such expectations reasonable.

comparative educational studies were less common than they are now. In particular, schools in capitalist Japan and Germany seem to have retained a greater share of their original legitimacy than schools in capitalist America. The cultural legacies of Japan and Germany, however, are historically more cohesive than the American "culture." One might also speculate that the Japanese culture is perhaps the ideal post-industrial culture, since the Japanese traditional culture is a magpie, successfully accommodating, adapting, and integrating elements of other cultures from at least the seventh century A.D. forward.

Second, Bell's critique of the "sensibility of the sixties" strikes the contemporary reader as shrill in contrast to other sections of Contradictions. This observation is more a question of style, but the self-indulgence of this section of the text inelegantly obscures a number of important points. First, Bell ignores the political and cultural contradictions inherent in the youth culture of the sixties. Although this decade is popularly remembered as an age of widespread political activism, it was nonetheless an age of remarkably ineffectual political activism, paralleling the nation's longest, most costly, most pointless, and most unpopular war. The relentless cultural critique so apparent elsewhere in the text might have been applied to an analysis of the ineffectualness of political activism in the sixties. Bell might have shown how the notions of hedonism, anti-intellectualism, and the "imperial self" subverted the political objectives of the day. Further, he might have shown how such contradictions served interests located in the techno-economic realm (later to those interests' detriment--a contradiction Bell could not have known, but might, in the logic of his analysis foretold).

Despite these objections, Bell's arguments must be taken seriously by educators in America who are concerned with what education is and what education does (or is asked to do). Bell believes that the cultural legacy (a) is the only source of meanings and values that can preserve society and (b) must ultimately be what education is and does. For this reason, schools are bound up in the survival of society. Educators need to ask (but seldom do), if the principles and structures of the techno-economic realm best represent the mission of education, and, hence, of schooling. This question must be acknowledged as an ethical, not a technical, inquiry (cf. Bell, 1976; Marcuse, 1978); Bell's analysis of post-industrial society suggests why an ethical treatment of this issue is imperative.

General implications for teachers and administrators. The polity's operation of the schools hardly reflects a disinterested support of culture. Rather, schools serve as the institution that specializes the human intellect for work in the capitalist system. Bell notes that science is the paragon among ways of knowing in contemporary society, in part because of its use of rational means, but in particular because of its instrumental technologies. In times of threat, therefore, the schools are called upon to improve mathematics and science instruction (Cuban, 1982; Tannenbaum, 1981).

Overarching cultural purposes--such as constructing meaning or value--become subservient to such purposes as "problem solving," a term that can be profitably contrasted with such terms as "contemplation," "critique," or "thinking" (see Perkins, 1981, for such comparison). The polity intends that schools operate as specialized institutions with a restricted cultural mission: the transmission of skills and habits of thought imagined to apply to (politically predetermined) technical utilities.

Schooling may, in this way, be interpreted as the socialized deflection of human intellect for privatized technical and economic ends. Building on the polity of liberal democracy (with its origin in negatively defined individual rights) and the role specialization of the techno-economic realm, the development of human intellect becomes, in schools, a specialized and systematic training of reified skills (as opposed to the growth of persons) that (merely) seem to be of immediate utility in the techno-economic realm. In Bell's analysis, this eventuality contributes to the cultural crisis of capitalism. Educators undermine the legitimacy of education as an institution by not defining a larger cultural mission for themselves. Education, like capitalism itself in Bell's analysis, embodies contradictions capable of causing its own destruction.

Bell might have argued, from the viewpoint of natural science, that the deflection of human intellect by schools is a denial of human nature. He finds this argument weak, however, because it engages a telos (progress toward an ultimate end) that culture lacks (Bell, 1976, p. 163). Instead, he argues that culture is the key to establishing a functional post-industrial society. Culture has always been important ethically, argues Bell, but in the post-industrial world it is important for survival.

In this argument humankind proceeds[24] from pre-industrial society (in which humankind struggles with the natural world) through industrial society (a technical world, in which humankind struggles with fabricated things--including the reification of humankind) to post-industrial society (a social world in which humankind has acquired the luxury and necessity of confronting

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[24]"Progresses," normally the appropriate term, would overstate Bell's view of history.

itself, based on knowledge and information in the context of community). Without a culture that enables humankind to confront the human condition (life and death, agony and ecstacy, grief and celebration) "we are left with the shambles of appetite and self-interest and the destruction of the moral circle which engirds mankind" (Bell, 1976, p. 171). The cultural legacy, however, is not perceived as contributing (in part, via educational institutions) the "human capital" necessary for sustained economic growth.[25]

Despite this apparent shortcoming of the cultural legacy, available historical data strongly suggest that economic development schemes that implicate education in an instrumental role are also ineffective (Carnoy, 1982; Grubb, 1985; Levin, 1984; Shackett & Slottje, 1986; Stronach, 1988; Zachariah, 1985). First, they greatly overstate the ability of education to effect economic changes, particularly of aims that seek to promote economic growth and economic justice simultaneously (a desiderata of politically liberal capitalist democracies).[26] Second, they misprize the nature of

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[25] See, e.g., DeYoung (1989), Howley (forthcoming), and Williams, (1988) for critiques of "human capital" as this construct relates to the national economy, rural economy, and to race and gender issues, respectively. Human capital typically refers to the specific skills--often trained at the workplace--that contribute to job performance. Educational attainment, however, is most frequently used as a proxy for such specific skills in research about human capital.

[26] Stronach (1988) refers to the aim of economic development proposed for education as "witchcraft." A century of failed experience with such aims, in Stronach's view, indicates that these instrumental aims function more effectively to reassure the powerful than to mystify the powerless (Stronach, 1988, p. 68). Grubb (1985) demonstrates that international "vocationalism"--the tendency of educational institutions, at all levels and in all nations, to address purely instrumental purposes--contributes to both economic and educational inequality. Others (e.g., Levin [1984]; Shackett & Slottje [1986]) show that increased educational attainment is associated with increased economic inequality--the opposite effect of that anticipated by human capital theory (cf. Mincer, 1989).

educational growth, and, especially, the nature of children and of human minds.[27]

The cultural contradictions of capitalism entail the loss of both cultural tradition and cultural authority. In Bell's analysis, in contrast to the neo-Marxian analysis, cultural contradictions, not political-economic contradictions, doom capitalism to extinction. The liberal-democratic quest for individual rights, leads--via the techno-economic specialization of social roles--to the profanation and abandonment of the very meanings and values that post-industrial society, as a self-made community, will need if it is to sustain itself. Even the cultural elite, who should provide leadership, can do little to reestablish the moral order of the social compact. The exercise of judgment itself becomes an exercise in futility for those few among the "alienated literary intellectuals" still capable of exercising it (Bell, 1973, p. 214; cf. Bell, 1976, p. 181).[28]

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[27]Zachariah (1985) distinguishes between children as "lumps of clay" and as "growing plants" to illustrate the techno-economic fallacy. The techno-economic fallacy assumes that human beings are analogous to "lumps of clay" (cf. Callahan, 1962), a fallacy reflected in the ascendant (conservative or technical) wing of the progressive education movement, [cf. Cremin, 1961]). By contrast, much of the (popular, but ironically less influential) radical and liberal critique of American education (e.g., Giroux, 1983; Goodman, 1964; Holt, 1964; Kozol, 1985; Silberman, 1970) acknowledges the importance of "nurture" in the growth or "cultivation" of immature minds. The two analogies embody techno-economic versus cultural aims for education.

[28]"There is, for example, the deep and growing split between the technical intelligentsia and the literary intellectuals, who have become increasingly apocalyptic, hedonistic, and nihilistic" (Bell, 1973, p. 214). Note that, via the contrasting terms "intelligentsia" and "intellectuals," Bell distinguishes between economically functional and dysfunctional cadres of mental workers. For Bell, the dysfunction of intellect under the sway of modernism (as opposed to the functionality of technical "intelligence") represents the cultural tragedy of capitalist society.

Schools, like other cultural institutions in capitalist society, have abrogated responsibility for the meanings and values that might otherwise sustain society in the coming post-industrial era. Rather than serving as a force for social cohesion, they indoctrinate students to serve, and to accustom themselves to serving, utilitarian ends in the political economy. This indoctrination includes mastery of the technical skills proper to expected economic roles, but equally important, the noncognitive attitudes (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Jackson, 1981a; Oakes, 1985) that correspond to such roles. Moreover, such noncognitive indoctrination is sharply visible even among the most cognitively talented students in schools (Anyon, 1980; A. Howley, 1986; C. Howley, 1987; Jackson, 1981b; Wilcox & Moriarity, 1977).

Implications for practice. This analysis suggests no general policy alternatives. Indeed, the mechanisms of the polity, the economy, and the culture itself militate against the articulation of policy alternatives capable of re-valuing the cultural legacy in ways that would make it increasingly accessible to students and faculty. A war against cultural entropy cannot be waged through pronouncements (cf. Timar & Kirp, 1987). Even in the current hysteria of reform, however, some of the available options can be cultivated by administrators in ways that might enhance the schools' legitimacy and institutional competence. Administrators and teachers can give more professional attention to articulating the cultural legacy on behalf of the institution of education in general and on behalf of their own schools and students in particular.

Administrators, in particular, should be critical of offers to involve schools in schemes that focus their main efforts on instrumental ends (e.g., economic development, vocationalism, drop-out pervention per se, and so

forth). Such goals are transitory, and the funding associated with them may be equally transitory. If funding is of no concern, however, even the good will that ensues from participation in such schemes may be equally transitory; moreover, focusing faculty efforts on instrumental ends may be, as Bell implies, a high price to pay for good will.

The human and financial resources claimed by such projects would be better devoted to the ongoing project of helping faculty access the cultural legacy. Even now, a variety of possibilities exists. The liberal arts have been a minor theme in the current (phase of perpetual) reform efforts. Although some observers view this minor theme as yet another manifestation of conservative influence in schools, others (e.g., Wigginton, 1985) demonstrate that reading, writing, and analysis are essential tools for reestablishing the social compact in ways that include students. In this effort, therefore, administrators need to attend to the way in which such knowledge is shared with students, but also to the social capital available in the community to support such instruction.

The implication in Coleman's (1988a, 1988b) analysis is that social capital is accumulated over time. Bell's analysis demonstrates, however, that the functional rationality so prevalent in the definition of roles (including kinship roles) makes the accumulation of social capital less likely in advanced capitalist societies. For this reason, the school itself might be the best place to begin such accumulation.

Social capital implicates multiple sources of concern over each child's well-being. Perhaps the most promising administrative technique to apply for this end is the creation, maintenance, and proliferation of small units within which students become "re-personalized," that is, to become--in the eyes of

each other and of school staff--something more than their roles (Barker & Gump, 1964; Friedkin & Necochea, 1988; Levin, 1983). A study by Giesbrecht (1978) demonstrates that such an approach can work. Students in this study attended small schools with a more limited--but more challenging--curriculum than that available to their more affluent peers in large high schools. The less affluent cohort in the small schools performed significantly better than the more affluent large-school cohort. Sharing the cultural legacy with students is a matter of interpretation--lead by an informed teacher, but with the necessarily actively participation of students. Small-scale, though more expensive than large-scale, provides the only setting in which such interpretation becomes possible.

Cultural Dilemma and the Ends and Means of Education

As a social institution based on tradition, the institution of culture alters slowly, and, as noted above, is more reflexive than progressive. By comparison, the polity is confronted with national and international crises that evoke calls for immediate resolution (Bell, 1976, pp. 175-176; Timar & Kirp, 1987, p. 316). At the same time, the schools have increasingly become the chief social means of perpetuating and extending the cultural realm. The dilemma for schools is that such work is carried on through technical, rather than cultural, means--for political, rather than cultural, ends.

While Timar & Kirp (1987) are neither the first nor the most articulate to perceive this dilemma, their phrasing may, in the context of the forgoing essay, suggest both (a) why resources are more relevant than goals to a

discussion of the failures of American education and (b) why the instrumental goals espoused for education--whatever they may be in different decades--can not sustain schooling as an institution, much less maintain and extend culture:

> Education has not generally been appreciated for its own intrinsic value but rather for what it could do....for what works. As long as education is regarded as an instrument, its value in American culture will most likely vary with the social, economic, or political demands of the day.
>
> (Timar & Kirp, 1987, pp. 315-316)

Indeed, if the transitory goals of schooling remain instrumental, and if resources (the most important of which are access culture and to social capital) remain out of reach, then schools will continue to play a marginal role in ensuring justice and establishing meaning in the post-industrial world. And without recourse to justice and meaning, the post-industrial will become an increasingly ugly and evil place, in Bell's view.

Epigraph

Modernity is capitalism.

(Bell, 1990, p. 47)

What we have here is the social reversal of the Copernican revolution: if our planet is no longer the center of the physical universe and our earthly habitat is diminished in the horizons of nature, the ego/self takes the throne as the center of the moral universe, making itself the arbiter of all decisions....The principle of modernity, though claiming autonomy for each realm, cuts across the culture, the economy, and the polity and transforms each in the name of the single, imperious impulse which drives it onward in its self-infinitizing quest.

(Bell, 1990, p. 46)

Yet emperors have always displayed their power by placing their heads on coins and their heels on culture.

(Bell, 1990, p. 43)

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